

“For many Big Beaver is the first and



Part One

only impression of the City of Troy”



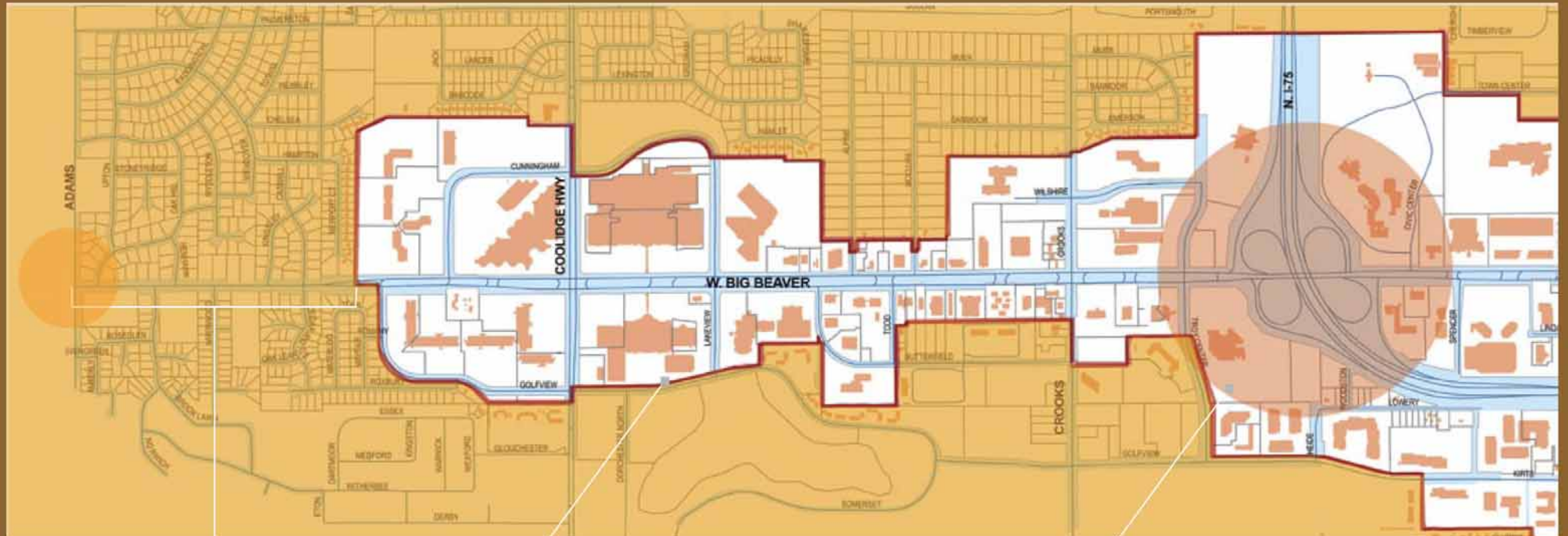
0

1 mile

2 miles

3 miles

This is “The Corridor”



Secondary Area of
The Corridor study

DDA District Boundary –
Primary Area of
The Corridor study

I-75 Gateway Interchange
Between Crooks and Livernois



0 miles

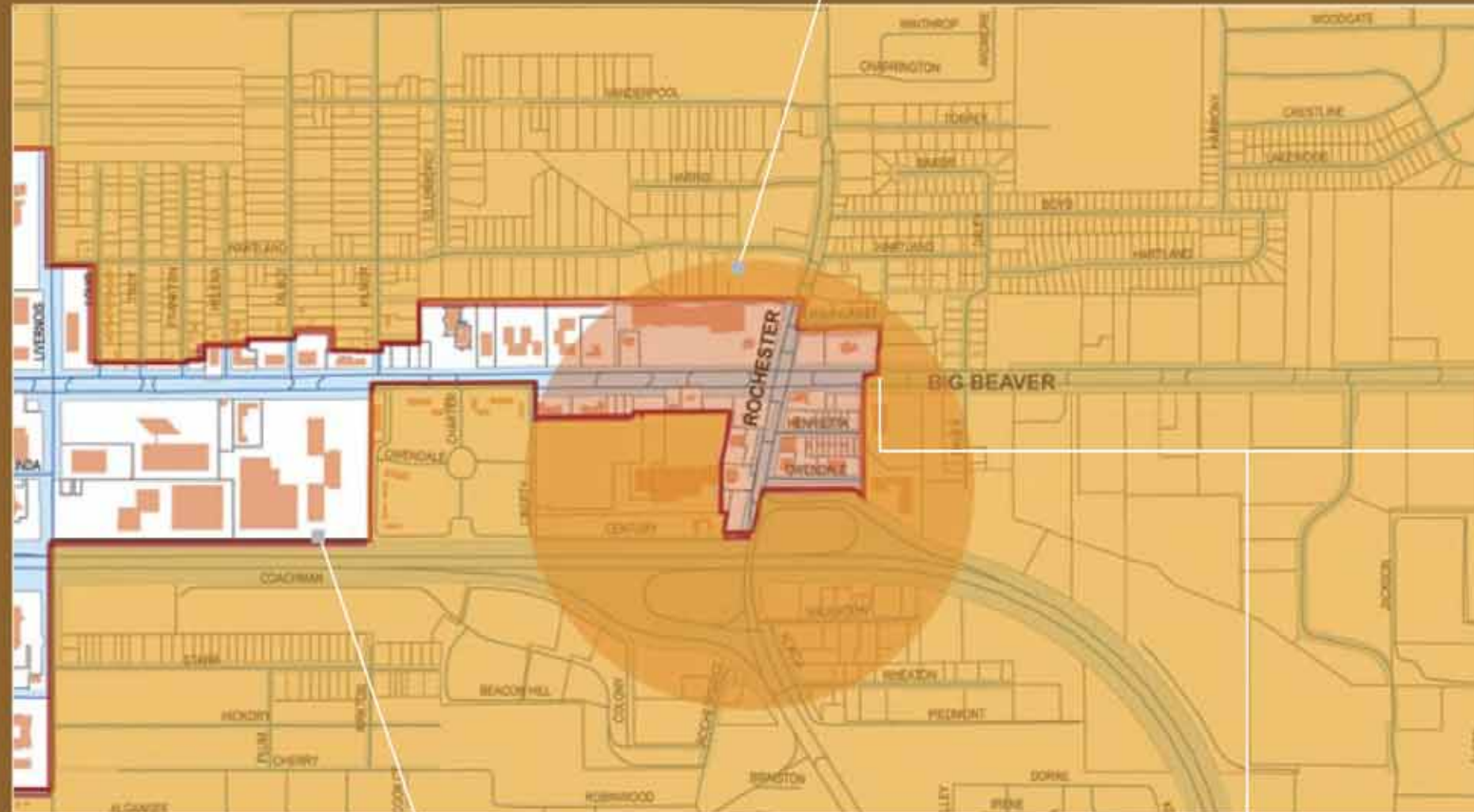
1 miles

2 miles

3 miles

Adams to Dequindre (6 miles)

1-75 Gateway Interchange
at Rochester Road



DDA District Boundary –
Primary Area of
The Corridor study

Secondary Area of
The Corridor study

Inventory and Analysis

The Big Beaver Corridor is a major east-west thoroughfare that runs through Oakland County and connects the City of Troy with Macomb County to the east and Woodward Avenue, Bloomfield Township and Birmingham to the west.

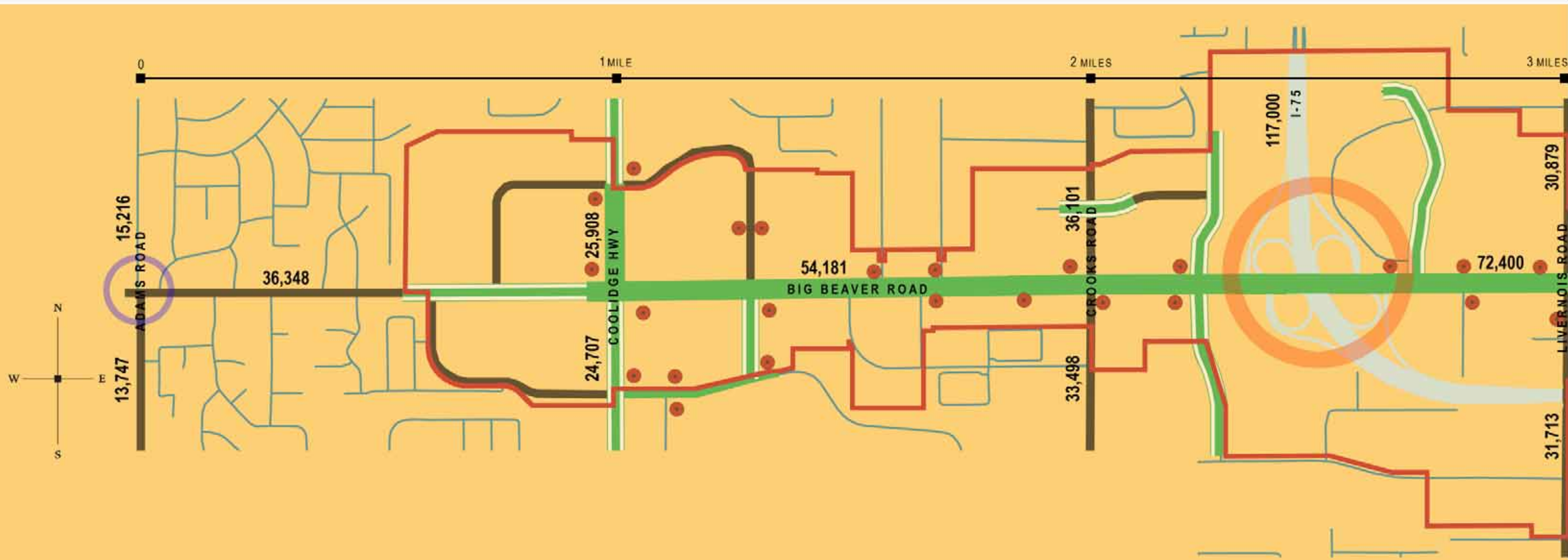
The Big Beaver Corridor Study Area includes a primary study area that matches the boundaries of the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) District and a secondary area that extends to complete the six mile segment along Big Beaver Road from Adams Road to Dequindre Road. Also included are intersections with major thoroughfares such as Coolidge, Crooks, Livernois, Rochester and John R, as well as intersections with a number of collector and local streets within the Corridor.

The following is an inventory of Corridor components for Analysis from which conclusion are offered in the following pages.

- Corridor, streets and traffic
- Pedestrian circulation
- Lighting, landscape and maintenance
- Driveway access
- Parking
- General land use
- Buildings and the Public Space

The Big Beaver Corridor represents a one of a kind premier district in the region but as will be revealed, its suburban planning and development principles severely limit its ultimate potential.





Corridor, Streets and Traffic

Excellent connector and collector traffic systems define the Corridor as primarily an automobile dominated world.



A



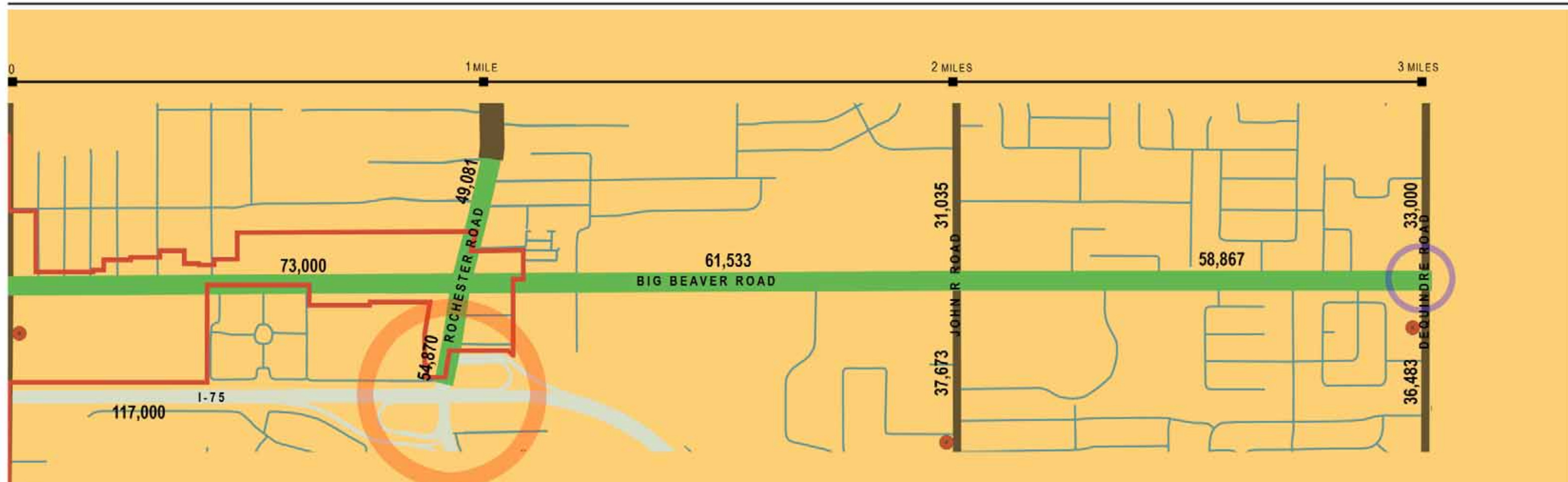
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C



D



Analysis

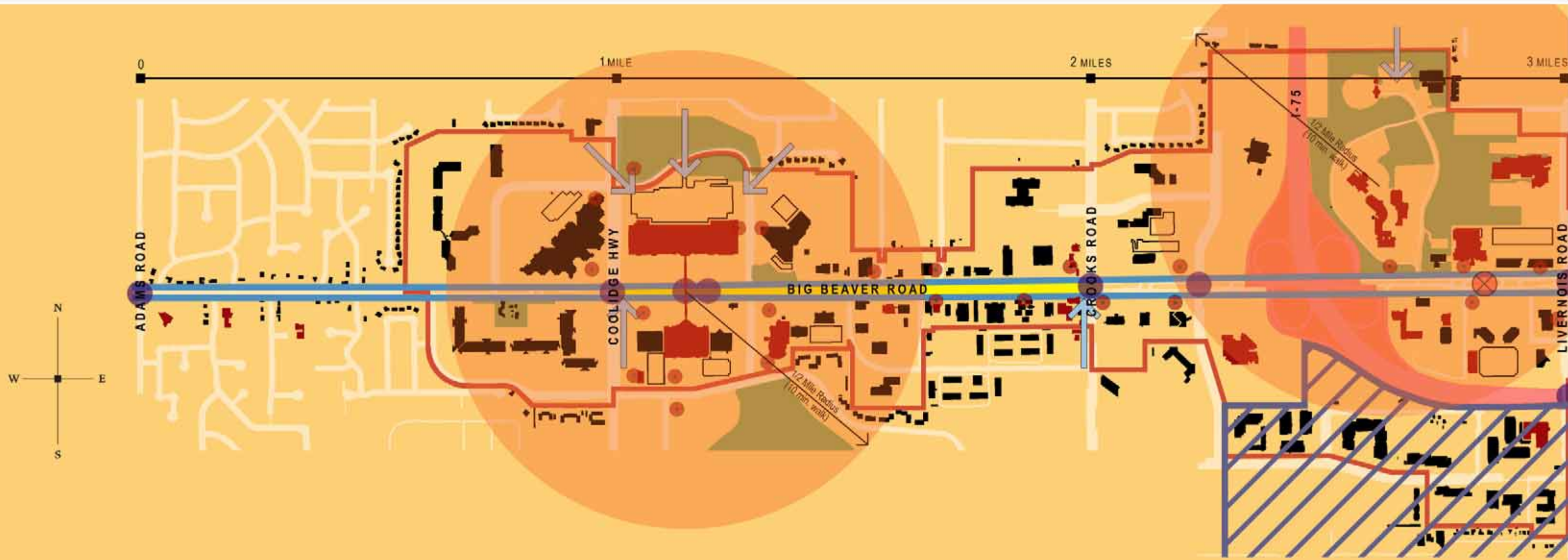
- Traffic volumes on Big Beaver range between 36,000 and 73,000 vehicles per day and are comparable to those along Woodward Avenue through Birmingham, which carries an average of 67,800 vehicles per day.
- As a 6-lane boulevard, Big Beaver Road is designed to function at an acceptable level of service with a traffic volume of 45,000 vehicles per day (level of service degrades as volumes increase).
- The boulevard cross-section of Big Beaver reduces potential conflicts between vehicles by restricting left turning movements. (see image A)
- The intersection of Rochester and Big Beaver Roads is the single most heavily traveled point within the Corridor. (see image B)
- For many visitors, the gateways represent the first impression of the City and the Corridor.
- The I-75 Freeway bisects the Corridor and creates a significant physical and visual barrier. (see image C)
- Bus stops are located primarily between Coolidge and Livernois and lack pedestrian amenities such as shelters and benches. (see image D)

Conclusions

- Traffic volumes along Big Beaver create opportunities for retail and restaurant uses in the Corridor.
- Traffic management will be a challenge as development intensity increases along the Corridor.
- There is significant opportunity for enhancement of the Big Beaver Corridor and gateways.

LEGEND:

- DDA Boundary
- Bus Stop
- 2 Lane Road
- 2 Lane Boulevard
- 4 Lane Road
- 4 Lane Boulevard
- 6 Lane Road
- 6 Lane Boulevard
- Interstate (I-75)
- Major Corridor Gateway
- Minor Corridor Gateway
- 61,533 Daily Traffic (source: City of Troy Engineering Dept.)



Pedestrian Circulation

Pedestrians out for a stroll is not an experiential feature of the Corridor



A



B



C



D



E



LEGEND:

- DDA Boundary
- Primary Pedestrian Destinations (i.e. shopping restaurants, services, hotels, civic, churches, clubs)
- Primary Pedestrian Use / Activity
- Pedestrian Barrier / Restrictor
- Pedestrian Isolated Area (with limited access to corridor)
- Open Space / Recreation Areas
- Corridor Sidewalks
- Pedestrian Crossing Locations
- 1/2 Mile Walking Distance
- Primary Pedestrian Influence (adjacent residential uses)
- Bus Stop Locations
- Non-Designated Pedestrian Crossing

Analysis

- The Corridor is primarily designed to service the automobile.
- Pedestrian circulation is largely confined to commercial nodes that offer destination uses - i.e. shopping, services, restaurants and hotels (primarily within a half mile walking distance)
- The majority of the pedestrian activity is within the “primary pedestrian use zone” where quality destinations exist and are of the highest density and proximity.
- Marked pedestrian crossings are very limited (approximately 9 locations) almost one mile apart in some locations. This greatly restricts pedestrian interconnection between north and south sides of the Corridor, and results in pedestrians dangerously crossing in unmarked areas.
- Above grade (bridge) crossing at the Somerset Collection very effectively and safely facilitates pedestrian Corridor crossing. The all-weather protection aspect of the bridge enhances usability.

Conclusions

- Pedestrian activity is minimal due to lack of residential or mixed uses along or directly adjacent to the Corridor.
- Increasing the number and disbursement of destinations along the Corridor will encourage pedestrian traffic throughout.
- Lack of interconnection between uses and destinations greatly impacts pedestrian activity.

Sidewalks within the Big Beaver Corridor are generally well maintained; however, there are examples throughout the study area of overgrown bushes and untrimmed trees that detract from the pedestrian experience and discourage foot traffic.



One of the most noticeable characteristics is the automobile dominant nature of the Corridor. Currently, Big Beaver Road functions as a high speed thoroughfare, rather than a pedestrian-friendly city core.



Despite the landscaped median and right-of-ways, excess signage and lighting reduce visual quality along the Corridor.

Lighting, Landscape and Maintenance

Efficient and practical, missing an opportunity to add character and interest to the corridor



A



B



C



D

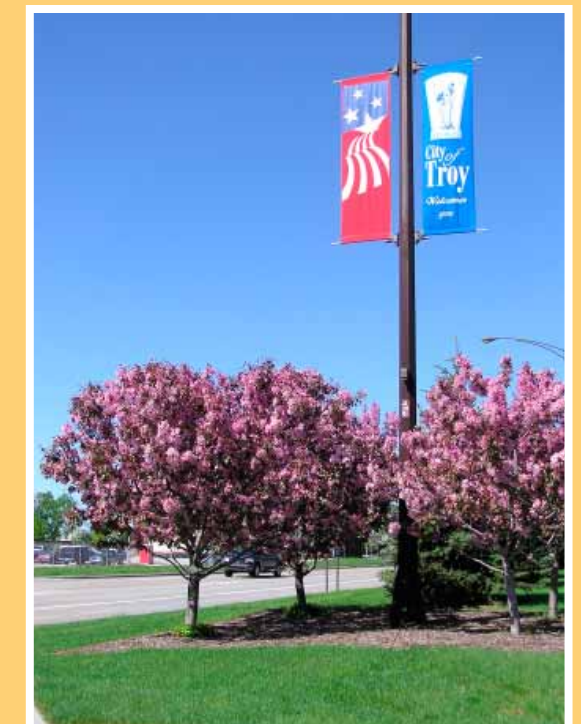


E

The narrow, columnar trees separating the traffic lanes from the sidewalk provide little enclosure for pedestrians. Larger canopy trees would offer the pedestrian a visual and spatial feeling of separation from the nearby traffic.



Light fixtures along the Corridor are the largest and most visually dominant feature, and provide no architectural contribution to the character of the Corridor.



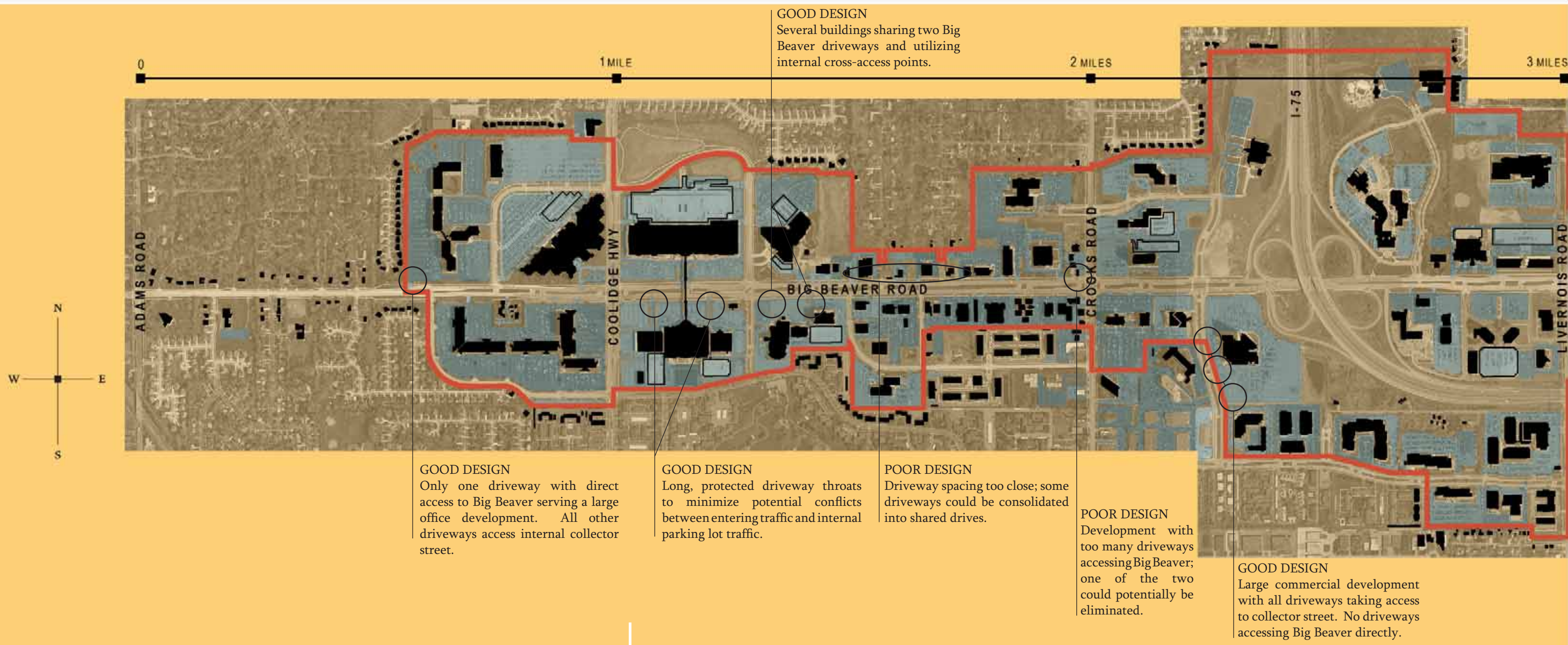
The heavily landscaped median breaks up the expanse of Big Beaver's six lanes of traffic and gives the roadway an attractive suburban appearance. This manicured and maintained boulevard evidences the importance of this Corridor within the City of Troy and the surrounding region.

Analysis

- Attractive and well maintained landscaping throughout the Corridor illustrates a sense of pride among property owners. Perennial and annual beds create beautiful displays of color, while hedgerows shield parking areas from public view. (see image A)
- While pavers mark crosswalk locations for pedestrians along the sidewalk, some crosswalk markings within the roadway require attention and are evidence of an automobile-dominated Corridor. (see image B)
- Areas of the median that are substantially crowned help reduce visual distractions from oncoming traffic. (see image C)
- Existing pole lighting's physical size and style lack human scale, reinforce the highway image and visual dominate the Big Beaver Corridor. (see image D)
- Decorative sidewalk pavers are used along Big Beaver to designate bus stops and crosswalk locations. While the use of pavers generally enhances the streetscape and pedestrian experience, many of these areas are in need of improvement. Amenities, such as plantings and decorative tree gates, must be maintained and replaced when necessary. (see image E)

Conclusions

- The use of human-scaled pole lighting will improve the character and scale of the Corridor and substantially transform and improve the pedestrian character.
- While privately landscaped areas are generally well maintained, Corridor landscape design guidelines can help produce more unified site appearance.
- While maintenance is generally good throughout the Corridor, a well enforced maintenance ordinance will ensure a consistently positive image of the site.



Driveway Access

Managing highway traffic and property access issues is a planning priority



A



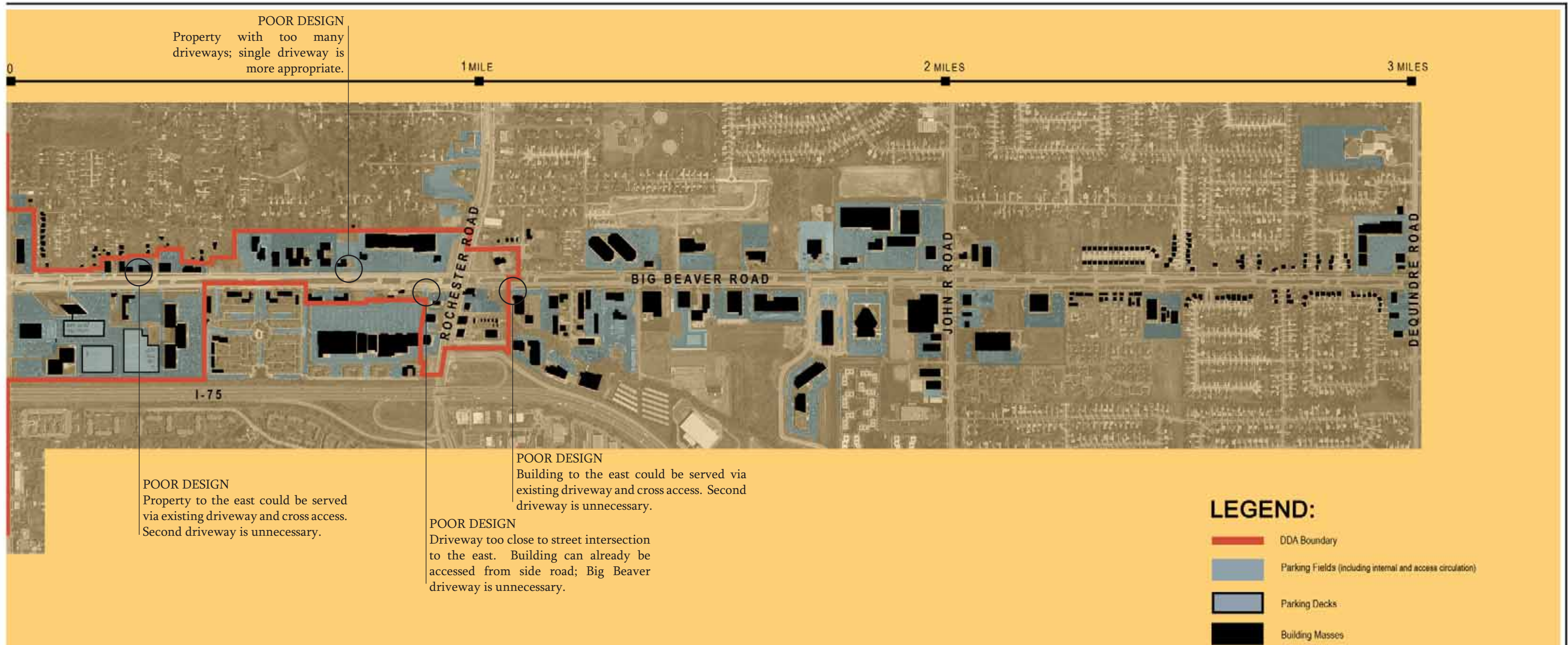
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D

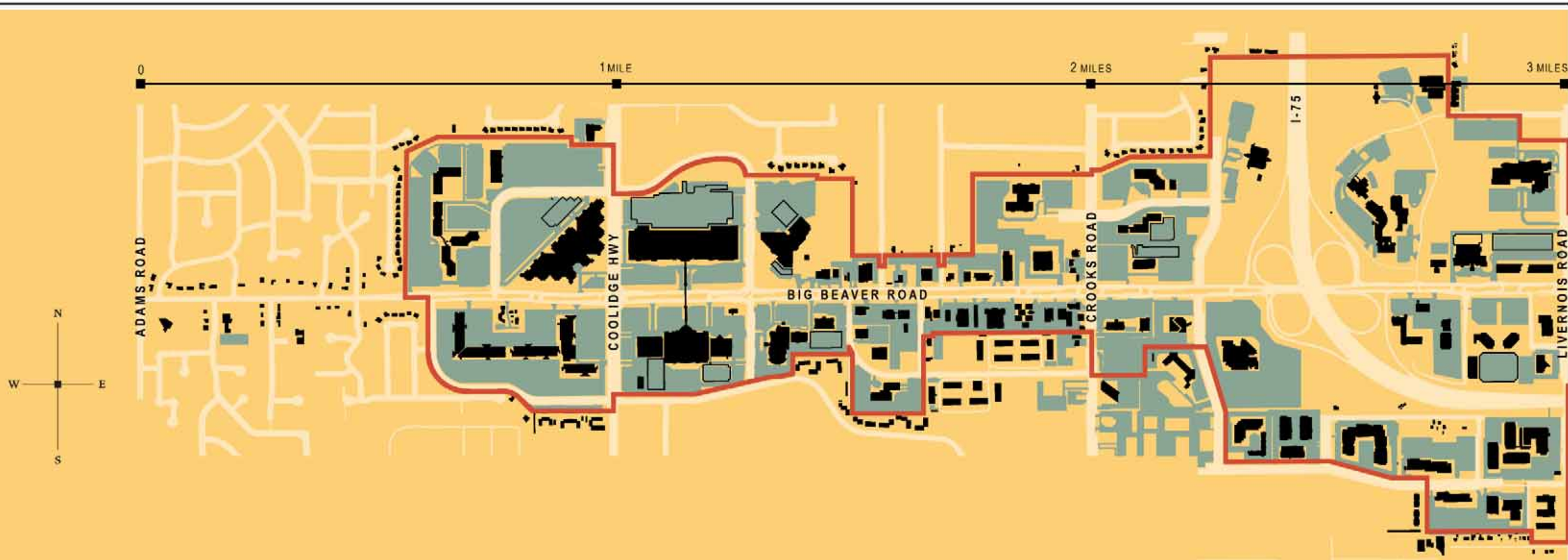


Analysis

- There are many examples of commercial properties with an excessive number of driveways, insufficient spacing between driveways, and driveways situated too close to an intersection. These situations can impact traffic safety and interfere with pedestrian and bicycle movements through the corridor. (see images A and B)
- Wayfinding, or the use of directional signs, is very limited along the Corridor. If a sign provides too many “chunks” of information, it increases the amount of time necessary for driver comprehension. (see image C)
- There are several collector streets within the Corridor (e.g., Cunningham, Golfview, Lakeview, Wilshire, Troy Center) that provide access to large commercial developments and minimize driveways onto Big Beaver and other major roads. (see image D)

Conclusions

- There is significant opportunity for improved property access within the Corridor.
- Property access and driveway location will continue to be a challenge as development intensity increases along the Corridor.
- A planned system of collector and local streets, as well as private internal access drives, will be important to the success of Big Beaver as a mixed use urban center.



Parking

The prominent land use component of the Corridor



A



B

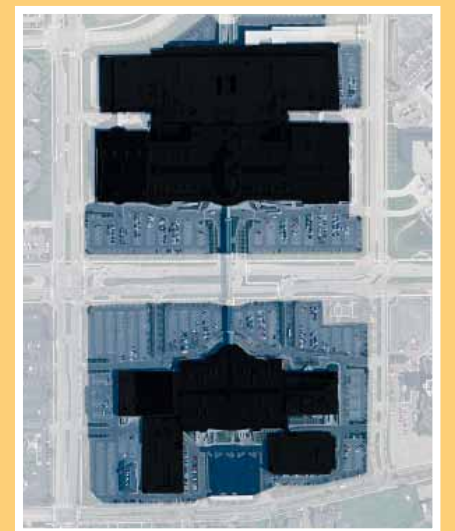


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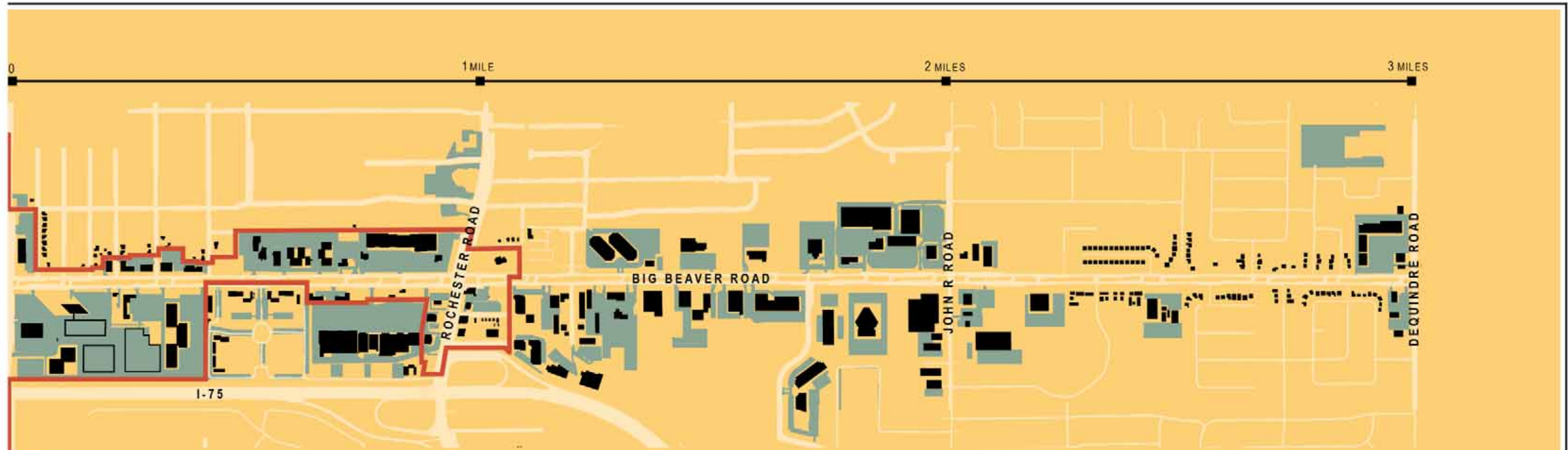
As illustrated by the comparison below, parking structures provide an opportunity for enhanced use of land for development purposes. Somerset Collection North, in particular, maximizes building area on the site by accommodating a substantial majority of the parking needs within a structure.



12 Oaks Mall, Novi (surface parking only)
Approx. 102 acres of surface parking and access



Somerset Collection (parking structures and limited surface parking)
Approx. 42 acres of surface parking and access



LEGEND:

- DDA Boundary
- Parking Fields (including internal and access circulation)
- Parking Decks
- Building Masses
- Public Roadways

Analysis

- 90% of all open space is covered with pavement.
- Green space within the parking fields is merely leftover space providing minimal benefit (i.e. shade, spatial definition, screening, etc). (see image B)
- Parking lots are individual to each development with minimal interconnection forcing traffic to use only main roads.
- Parking is unshared between properties requiring larger parking lots only devoted to its individual development. (see image C)
- Parking lots are largely unscreened. (see image A)
- Most parking is surface lots requiring the most land coverage.
- Large surface parking fields contribute to the lack of linkage between developments limiting pedestrian interconnection.

Conclusions

- Large parking fields contribute to the visual sprawl and physical separation of buildings and uses, limiting pedestrian interconnection.
- Large distances between uses to accommodate individual parking fields and roadways contribute to the lack of community, neighborhood or of a cohesive urban center.
- Expansive amounts of impervious paved areas increases chemical runoff, and dramatically reduces water quality in the region.



General Land Use

Autonomous and independent variety of single use parcels



A



B



C



D



Analysis

- The Big Beaver Corridor study area contains a mixture of land uses including office, regional and local commercial, public, institutional, light industrial, and residential, that have been developed as independent sites bearing little or no relation to each other.
- The primary study area is predominantly comprised of medical and professional offices, with approximately 64% of the total land area within the DDA District utilized for office uses ranging from single-story and low-rise individual buildings to much larger, mid and high-rise buildings and complexes offering first-class office space. (see Image A)
- Limited suburban strip commercial exists within the primary study area at the intersections of Big Beaver with Crooks and Rochester Roads, as well as several hotels, and a significant amount of regional commercial space within the Somerset Collection. Hotels and local and regional commercial uses comprise approximately 18% of the total land area within the DDA District. (see Image B)
- Residential uses are limited within the Corridor and are mainly located outside of the primary study area.
- A significant amount of underutilized land exists within the Corridor (e.g., large surface parking areas, single family residential lots, and vacant properties). (see images C and D)

Conclusions

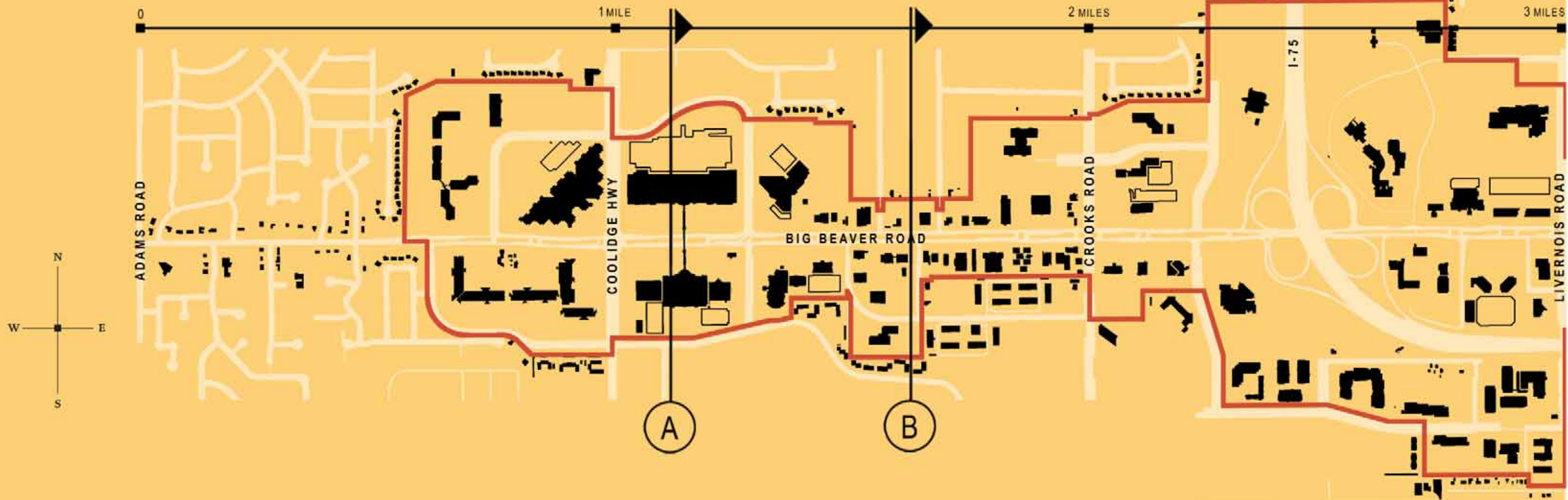
- The Big Beaver Corridor presents immense opportunities for development and redevelopment.
- Residential land uses and changes in the pattern and form of development within the primary study area will be key to the success of Big Beaver as a mixed use urban center.



Land Use of Primary Study Area

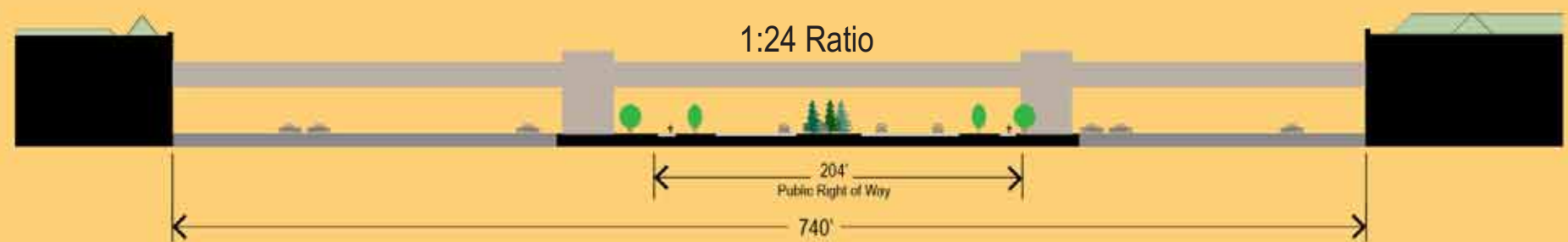
LEGEND:



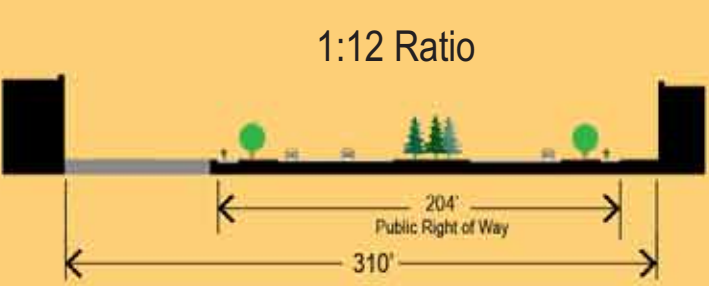


Buildings and the Public Space

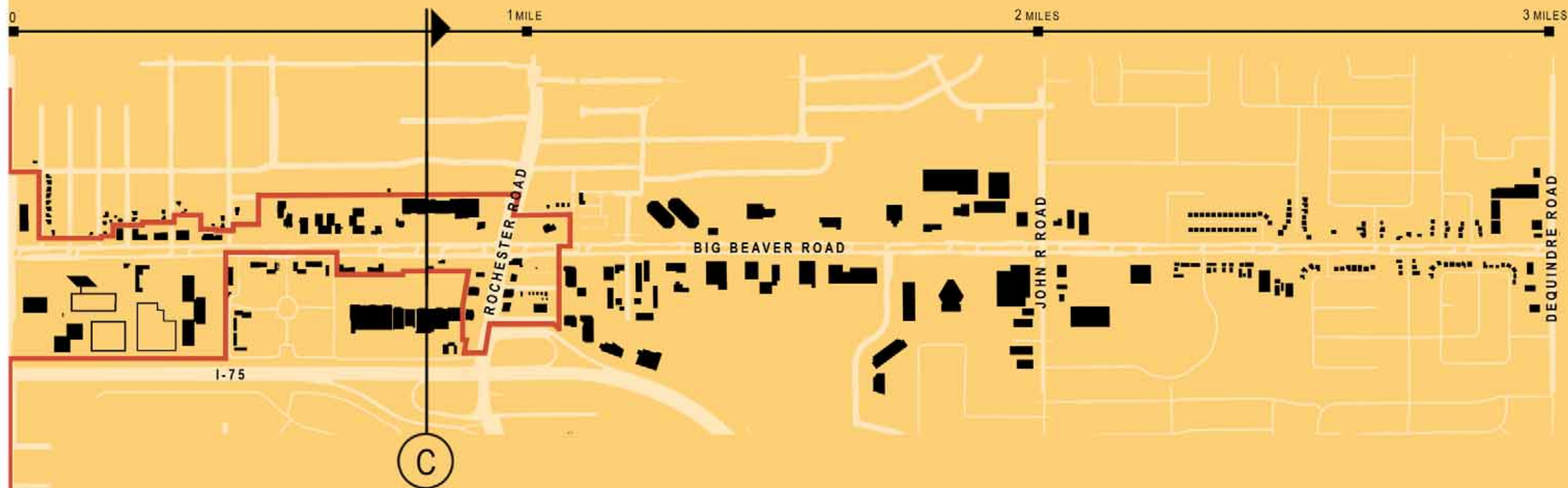
Building height, volume and placement reinforce the Corridor's open, unconnected suburban style space



Section A: Existing Corridor Section



Section B: Existing Corridor Section



Analysis

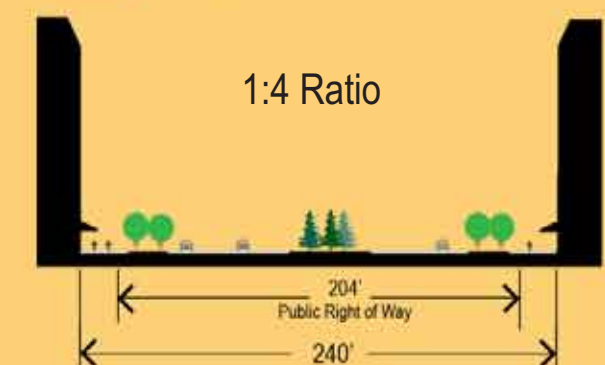
- Building massing contributes to street definition by establishing where the edges are. The Corridor lacks or has varying degrees of definition exceeding human comfort scale.
- The Corridor’s sense of definition is several times larger than ideal human scale, the ideal being 1 vertical to 4 horizontal.
- The large spacing between buildings also contribute to the Corridor’s lack of definition, allowing space to “bleed out.”

Conclusions

- Corridor massing defines a suburban placement of isolated, individual properties along a thoroughfare axis.
- Edges that define human scaled space and create harmonious proportion are largely unclear.

LEGEND:

- DDA Boundary
- Building Mass

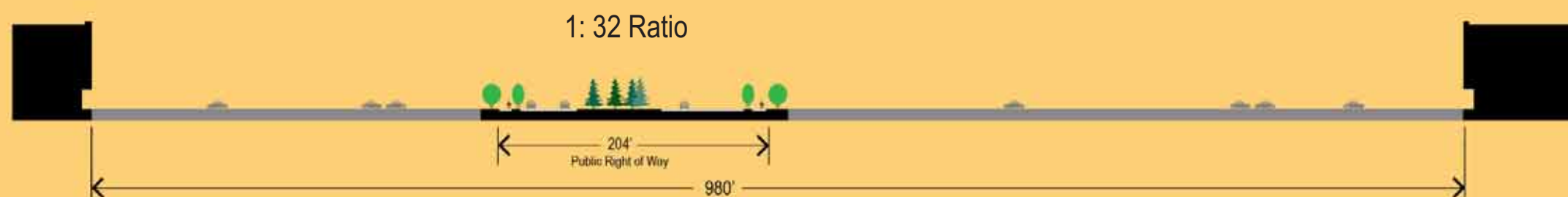


Cross Section of a World Class Boulevard

This cross section defines two important aspects of public space which will be advocated as part of the world class boulevard strategy.

1. A redesigned street system (boulevard style) within the existing 204' Right-of-Way, incorporating formalized tree plantings dividing drive lanes from access and parking lanes, and the sidewalk.
2. Multi-storied buildings close to the sidewalk, along with tree plantings at the curb, create a an appropriate scaled space for pedestrians.

This boulevard cross section and the public space it creates is a dramatic departure from the Corridor’s existing cross sections shown to the left.

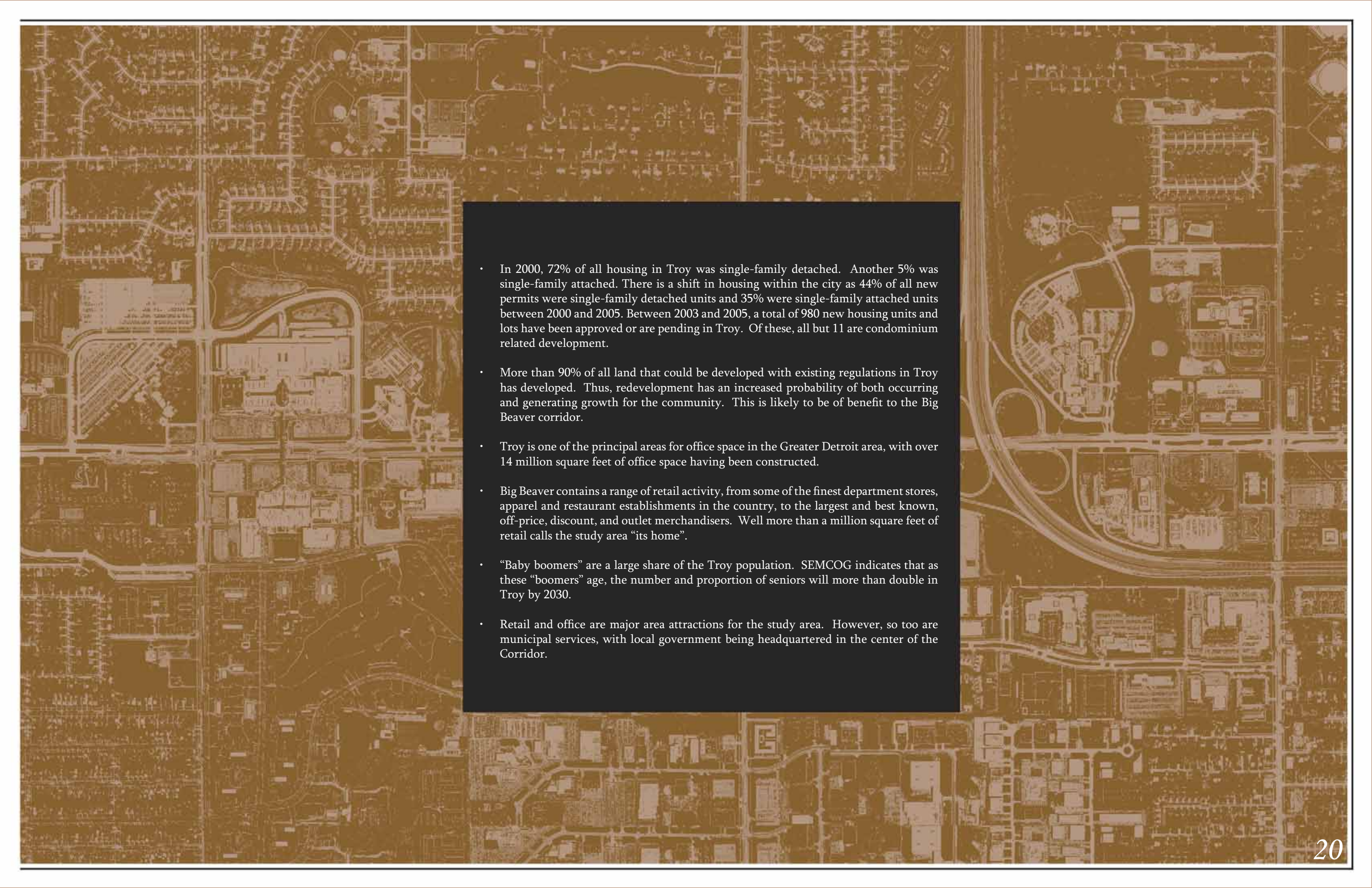


Section C: Existing Corridor Section

Part One/Economic and Market Context

The residential market in Troy and surrounding areas are the driving force for economic activity. They purchase the retail goods and services, provide the labor force for the office and other activity, and they provide demand for professional and personal services along Big Beaver and in Troy. Furthermore, in viable downtowns, urban centers and mixed-use corridors, residential is a necessary component associated with “24-7” activity. Thus, existing activity along the corridor and trends in residential development are often the cornerstones upon which to build the future.

- Troy has grown significantly in terms of population and households for many years. For example, the population in the city increased from about 67,100 to 80,500 between 1980 and 2000 census periods.
- SEMCOG projects a continued increase in household growth for Troy through 2030 and potentially beyond, with continued declines in the size of the average household.
- More people work in Troy than reside in the city. Troy employment is in excess of 100,000 persons. The 2000 census indicated that 29% of all Troy residents work in the city.
- According to census information, 18% of the population of Troy was non-White in 2000, with 13% of the population being Asian. Of the minority groups, the Hispanic population and those originating in India are the two fastest growing segments.
- The population in the city is highly educated. At least 60% of the city’s adult population has at least a Bachelor’s Degree, and 75% of all residents have some college.
- The population is not only highly educated, but is also relatively affluent. The most recent census indicated that about three-fourths of the households that reside in Troy have annual household incomes in excess of \$50,000. Almost four in ten (37%) of all residents live in households with annual incomes above \$100,000. The median household income for Troy, derived from the 2000 census information, was \$77,500.

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- An aerial photograph of a city, likely Troy, Michigan, showing a dense grid of streets and buildings. A semi-transparent dark rectangular box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing a list of bullet points. The background image is in a monochromatic brown/orange tone.
- In 2000, 72% of all housing in Troy was single-family detached. Another 5% was single-family attached. There is a shift in housing within the city as 44% of all new permits were single-family detached units and 35% were single-family attached units between 2000 and 2005. Between 2003 and 2005, a total of 980 new housing units and lots have been approved or are pending in Troy. Of these, all but 11 are condominium related development.
 - More than 90% of all land that could be developed with existing regulations in Troy has developed. Thus, redevelopment has an increased probability of both occurring and generating growth for the community. This is likely to be of benefit to the Big Beaver corridor.
 - Troy is one of the principal areas for office space in the Greater Detroit area, with over 14 million square feet of office space having been constructed.
 - Big Beaver contains a range of retail activity, from some of the finest department stores, apparel and restaurant establishments in the country, to the largest and best known, off-price, discount, and outlet merchandisers. Well more than a million square feet of retail calls the study area “its home”.
 - “Baby boomers” are a large share of the Troy population. SEMCOG indicates that as these “boomers” age, the number and proportion of seniors will more than double in Troy by 2030.
 - Retail and office are major area attractions for the study area. However, so too are municipal services, with local government being headquartered in the center of the Corridor.

Part One/Summary of Inventory and Analysis

The Inventory and Analysis presented on the previous pages tells a classic story of post World War II suburban development. Characterized by a high volume traffic highway and standardized single-use zoning of adjacent properties, it represents the planning philosophy of that era and creates places that seriously limit development potential for the 21st Century.

Enlightened communities and planners now embrace planning concepts with mixed-use form based codes with eons of historical precedent which created places where people have congregated for many years. Part two of this document defines one component of a comprehensive urban plan for the City of Troy – changing Big Beaver from highway to World Class boulevard. This is a strategy advocated by the DDA to reignite the development potential for this premier area in the region.



The Existing Corridor



The Future Boulevard?



Part One/Conclusions

Existing Corridor versus Future Boulevard

Corridor, Streets and Traffic

Traffic volumes along Big Beaver create exciting opportunities; however, they also present significant, but solvable challenges to the world class boulevard idea.

Pedestrian Circulation

The existing Corridor is about automobiles, not pedestrians; while a world class boulevard is about many things, including an emphasis on the pedestrian.

Lighting, Landscape and Maintenance

The existing lighting and landscape is designed in context to the Corridor's traffic thoroughfare function. The lighting and landscape of the future boulevard will define a human scale and an attractive place, and will become a major reason why people will want to be there.

Driveway Access

Existing property access driveways will fundamentally change in response to the future world class boulevard street design.

Parking

The existing parking fields create an environment of isolated parcels with no opportunity for interaction, civic life or sense of community. The world class boulevard strategy includes, as a requirement, mixed uses and adjacencies, as well as new parking policies to accommodate them.

Land Use

The Big Beaver Corridor's existing suburban land use pattern offers immense development opportunities if mixed use and residential urban planning principles are introduced as part of the world class strategy.

Buildings and the Public Space

Existing building heights, volumes, placements, and the zoning requirements that dictate them, severely limit the potential opportunities and implementation of the world class boulevard strategy.

Part One/Stakeholder Summaries

The Big Beaver Corridor Study process included the following opportunities for public input and comment:

Web Site

A project web site was maintained at www.bigbeavercorridor.com. This site provided project updates, drafts of background materials, stakeholder summaries, and plans. It also provided an opportunity for email input to the City of Troy Planning Department.

Vision Fair

On January 18, 2006, a Vision Fair open house was held at the City of Troy Community Center. This provided an opportunity for members of the public, Corridor property owners, and interested parties to chat with City staff and provide input via written surveys and informal discussions. A summary of the Vision Fair participant comments is found in the Appendix.

Stakeholders Meeting

On January 26, 2006, a group of property owners and business representatives from the Big Beaver Corridor were invited to a workshop at the City of Troy Community Center. This workshop provided a roundtable-type discussion of the evolution of the Big Beaver Corridor into a world-class boulevard.

The stakeholders discussed several questions posed by the Consultant Team as part of the process.

Question 1 was, "Identify the existing assets of the Corridor that should be preserved and enhanced within the future World Class Boulevard." The response receiving the most support was "redevelopment opportunities." This was followed by "Somerset Collection" and "presence of major employers."

Question 2 was, "What critical elements should be given high priority to begin the transformation of the Big Beaver Corridor into a World Class Boulevard?" The number one response was "nightlife," followed by "creation of distinct districts," "catalytic uses (public and private)," "convention center," and "walkability."

Question 3 was, "How can the City assist the private sector (property owners, businesses, and developers) in order to achieve the World Class Boulevard vision? Response #1 was, "ordinances that attract and maintain businesses," followed by "form-based code (zoning revisions)," "expand the role of the DDA," and "incentive funding from the DDA."



Experts Meeting

A meeting with design professionals with experience in world-class development projects was held on February 8, 2006 at the City of Troy Community Center. This workshop included a bus tour of the Big Beaver Corridor and a workshop session on the future of the Corridor.

Experts commented on key results envisioned for the Big Beaver Corridor Study. These included the following:

- Evaluate Business Improvement District
- Empower great design
- Unified vision
- Active first floor spaces
- Predictable outcomes for developers
- Transit service
- Pedestrian connections
- Destination
- New zoning policy
- New master plan
- Experiential place
- Regional destination
- Vision and leadership
- Embrace new development
- Phased approach
- Slow traffic on Big Beaver

Transportation Stakeholders Meetings

Meetings were also held with representatives of the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) and the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART), to gain input on transportation issues.

Conclusions

The public input received during the planning process provided the City and Consultant Team with inspiration, enthusiasm, history, and direction.

